

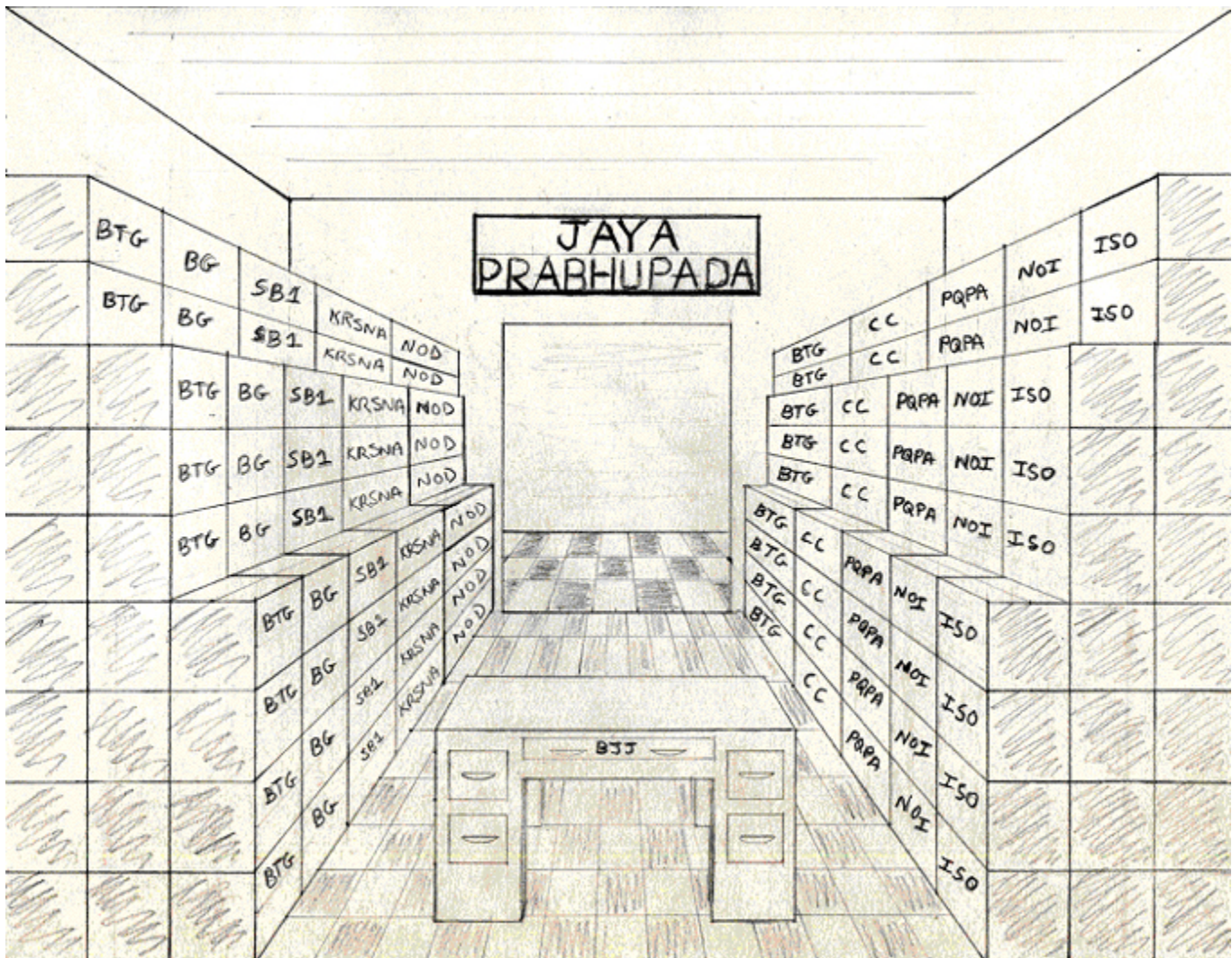


Editorials

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340 West 55th Street

BY: BHAKTA JOHN JAGANNATHA



Srila Prabhupada's Bookroom 340 West 55th Street

Dec 24, 2020 — BROOKLYN, NEW YORK (SUN) — A Personal Glimpse of Srila Prabhupada's Bookroom.

During my short time of service in Srila Prabhupada's bookroom on the southeast side of the second floor of Sri Sri Radha Govinda Mandira of 340 West 55th Street Manhattan, I was blessed to serve the direct disciples of ISKCON Founder-Acarya His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami. Every day I would distribute laxmi and Srila Prabhupada's original unchanged books and Back to Godhead magazines to the sankirtan devotees. They would give me their association and tell me of their personal experiences and pastimes preaching the glories of chanting the Holy Names – *HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA HARE HARE*.

[If you walk through the doorway and turn left you would soon be at the office of the Regional Secretary for New England, His Grace Romapada dasa (ACBSP); if you turn right you would soon be at the doorway of the temple Vice-president, His Grace Vakresvara-pandita dasa (ACBSP).]

I would sit or stand behind the desk pictured above, in the rough pencil illustration, while the Vaisnavas would come in to load up their book bags for another day of devotional service to Srila Prabhupada, informing the public about the way back to home, back to Godhead.

After the disappearance of His Divine Grace, the *original* books, or Srila Prabhupada's *vani*, in the author's humble opinion, became the heart and soul and life blood of the Manhattan temple in particular, and ISKCON in general.

Without the *original* books there was no basis for a *bona fide* guru-disciple relationship.

Without the *original* books there was no basis for *harinama sankirtana*.

Without the *original* books there was no basis for moving into a temple, rising early in the morning, abstaining from the consumption of meat, fish, eggs and poultry, honoring prasadam, dressing in Vaisnava devotional attire, worshipping the Deities, following the 4 regulative principles, and chanting daily a minimum of 16 rounds of the Maha mantra.

Without the *original* books there was no basis for the existence of ISKCON.

To be a servant of the servant of the servant, ad infinitum, of Srila Prabhupada's *vani* for that very short time was and is the pinnacle of the author's devotional life in this lifetime. To have had a direct hand in assisting the distribution of thousands of Srila Prabhupada's *original* books was a blessing. True, that's not much of a devotional accomplishment.

That's not the point.

As insignificant as the service seemed, for a relatively insignificant undeserving fallen spirit soul, it was still a *bona fide transcendental* service to Srila Prabhupada's ISKCON.

It was the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Bhagavan Sri Krishna's causeless mercy, without which this *jiva* would not exist.

Personal Remnants and Reminiscences of 340 West 55th Street

BY: BHAKTA JOHN JAGANNATHA



Apr 05, 2021 — NEW YORK (SUN) — PART ONE

I began this modest series of personal pastimes at Sri Sri Radha Govinda Mandira six years ago. My sole desire in this attempt to please the devotees was and is to inspire one, just one, former fellow resident to write or speak of their experiences serving the Vaisnavas, Srila Prabhupada and the Deities there. Perhaps I have failed in this endeavor. That is all right. There is no loss. The endeavor is mine but the results, be

they failure or success, are always in the lotus hands of the Supreme Lord. So I carry on with my humble endeavor for it is all I have to offer.

I beg for the mercy of the Vaisnava devotees of the Supreme Lord Bhagavan Sri Krsna that they may find some small portion of this simple presentation useful as an example of the mistakes, illusions, imperfections and cheatings to be avoided in the discharge of devotional service.

I searched and researched the dimly lit recesses of my memory banks, using my feeble mind and simpleton's intelligence, to recover some humble keepsake remnants and reminiscences of my youthful attempt at devotional service at the former monumental skyscraper Vaisnava temple of 340 West 55th Street. I wiped off the accumulated dust and mold, cleaned and shined, inspected and re-inspected and then went through the process all over again.

The essential theme of this anecdotal narrative of my less-than-exemplary behavior as an aspiring Vaisnava may be summed up by the following:

In the mornings I sometimes listen to the local AM radio news broadcast in New York City wherein they announce the local weather, the status of traffic on the highways and byways of the city and the condition of the mass transit system and the various subway and elevated trains of the five boroughs. They present up-to-the-minute information on police actions, fires, accidents and delays which may be encountered by local commuters. The brief transmission of information concludes with this phrase:

"Now you know where *not* to go."

That is it exactly. It is my hope, by revealing candidly and publicly, my personal examples of insubordination to proper authorities, egotistical sense of entitlement, blundering immaturity and offensive rascaldom that one may know precisely where *not* to go and what *not* to do if serious with reference to advancement in bhakti yoga or Krsna consciousness.

*vedavinasinam nityam
ya enam ajam avyayam
katham sa purusah partha
kam ghatayati hanti kam*

Translation:

"O Partha, how can a person who knows that the soul is indestructible, unborn, eternal and immutable, kill anyone or cause anyone to kill?

Purport

excerpt:

Everything has its proper utility, and a man who is situated in complete knowledge knows how and where to apply a thing for its proper utility..."
(*Bhagavad-gita As It Is, Chapter 2, Text 21*)

I would like to begin with my time stumbling and bumbling as a newly minted bhakta endeavoring to perform favorable devotional service for Srila Prabhupada's bookroom.

In the photograph at the top of the page there are two items closest to the pencil sketch in the background. Every year the devotees would make pilgrimage to Sridhama Mayapura for the Gaura Purnima festival. I have not been so blessed in this lifetime. However, when the devotees returned from pilgrimage in 1979 they carried with them pounds of gopicandana or tilaka.

"Tilaka is essential for devotees both for purification and protection. Furthermore, it is a beautiful decoration that declares to the world the identity of the wearer as a devotee of Visnu. When people see devotees wearing tilaka they are reminded of Krsna and are thus purified. ...various kinds of earth are sanctioned by scripture. Most Gaudiya Vaisnavas use gopicandana – a yellow clay sold in Vrindavana and Navadvipa..."
(*A Beginner's Guide to Krsna Consciousness*, by Bhakti Vikasa Swami, pgs. 63-64)

The two small pieces of tilaka on the right are remnants from what I received through the mercy of the devotees that year. The original piece I received was as large as the framed sketch.

The devotees also brought voluminous sacks filled with the holy dust of Vrindavana Dhama. The small sacred dust pile pictured on the left is all that remains of my share.

"As soon as he entered the boundary of Vrindavana, he saw the footprints of the cows and Lord Krishna's footprints, impressed with the signs of His sole, the flag, trident, thunderbolt and lotus flower. Upon seeing the footprints of Krishna, Akrura immediately jumped down from the chariot, out of respect. He became overwhelmed with all the symptoms of ecstasy; he wept, and his body trembled. Out of extreme jubilation upon seeing the dust touched by the lotus feet of Krishna, Akrura fell flat on his face and began to roll on the ground.

"Akrura's journey to Vrindavana is exemplary. One who intends to visit Vrindavana should follow the ideal footsteps of Akrura and always think of the pastimes and activities of the Lord. As soon as one reaches the boundary of Vrindavana, he should immediately smear the dust of Vrindavana over his body without thinking of his material position and prestige."
(*Krishna Book, Volume One*, pg. 248)

"Because Vrindavana dust is not different from Krishna, when you take a little dust from Vrindavana Dhama, it means you are taking the dust from Krishna's lotus feet."
(*Srila Prabhupada Tape 75/89*)

Also in the photograph there is a small purple cloth. It is no ordinary cloth. It is Lord Krsna's gumsha. Let me explain.

During my term of transcendental service in His Divine Grace's bookroom there was an abhisheka for the small Sri Sri Radha Krsna Deities. I do not recall the exact date or occasion, all I recall is the bathing of the Deities in the temple room. It was my first time attending an abhisheka.



Sri Sri Radha Krishna

The temple room was packed with the assembled resident Vaisnavas. All the brahmacharis and all the matajis were in attendance to observe the blissful auspicious transcendental event.

I stood on the west side among the brahmacharis. The roped off abhisheka area was in the center in front of Srila Prabhupada's vyasasana. Having a tall body I could stand behind the senior devotees and still see clearly the wonderful bathing ceremony of Their Lordships.

The Vaisnavas are familiar with the ceremony, the brahmanas chanting slokas from the scriptures, the assorted articles used in the bathing, everyone chanting the holy names: HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE.

When Their Lordships were properly bathed and dried the brahmanas hid Their Lordships behind curtains to dress Them in new clothes. During this phase one brahmana removed Lord Krishna's gumsha and without looking in any specific direction tossed it up into the air and above the crowd of devotees on the west side of the temple room.

The holy gumsha floated above the heads of the assembled Vaisnavas in the visual of my memory.

This pastime of my early attempt at devotional life in this lifetime always brings my consciousness back to another somewhat similar significant event nine years prior. The description of which may be useful as a minor example of dovetailing.

I am carried back to an evening in 1970.

I am on Second Avenue a few blocks uptown from 26 Second Avenue. I am standing outside of the Fillmore East waiting in line for a concert. My body is just fifteen years old. I notice a Hare Krishna devotee, a young man with shaved head and sikha, tilaka and dhoti distributing Back To Godhead magazines in the crowd. This is my second time in the presence of a disciple of Srila Prabhupada. The first time is just a year prior. At the time I do not make the connection. Although there is some attraction and curiosity I am too self-conscious and shy and I do not approach him nor does the prabhu approach me.

Once inside I am seated in the third row center and during the opening act the lead singer removes his tie and tosses it into the audience. Being young and athletic and excited at being at my first concert I use my inordinately lengthy arm and reach over and above the three rows of concert goers and snatch the tie out of the air. That mundane artifact is lost in time.

I return now to the current subject visual memory and my more physically mature and even more inordinately lengthy arm reached over and above the rows of devotees between me and the transcendental prize and souvenir and my hand grabbed it and my hand held on to it and I kept my spiritual treasure and worship it and never let it go. This is the very first time that I have shown it to anyone.

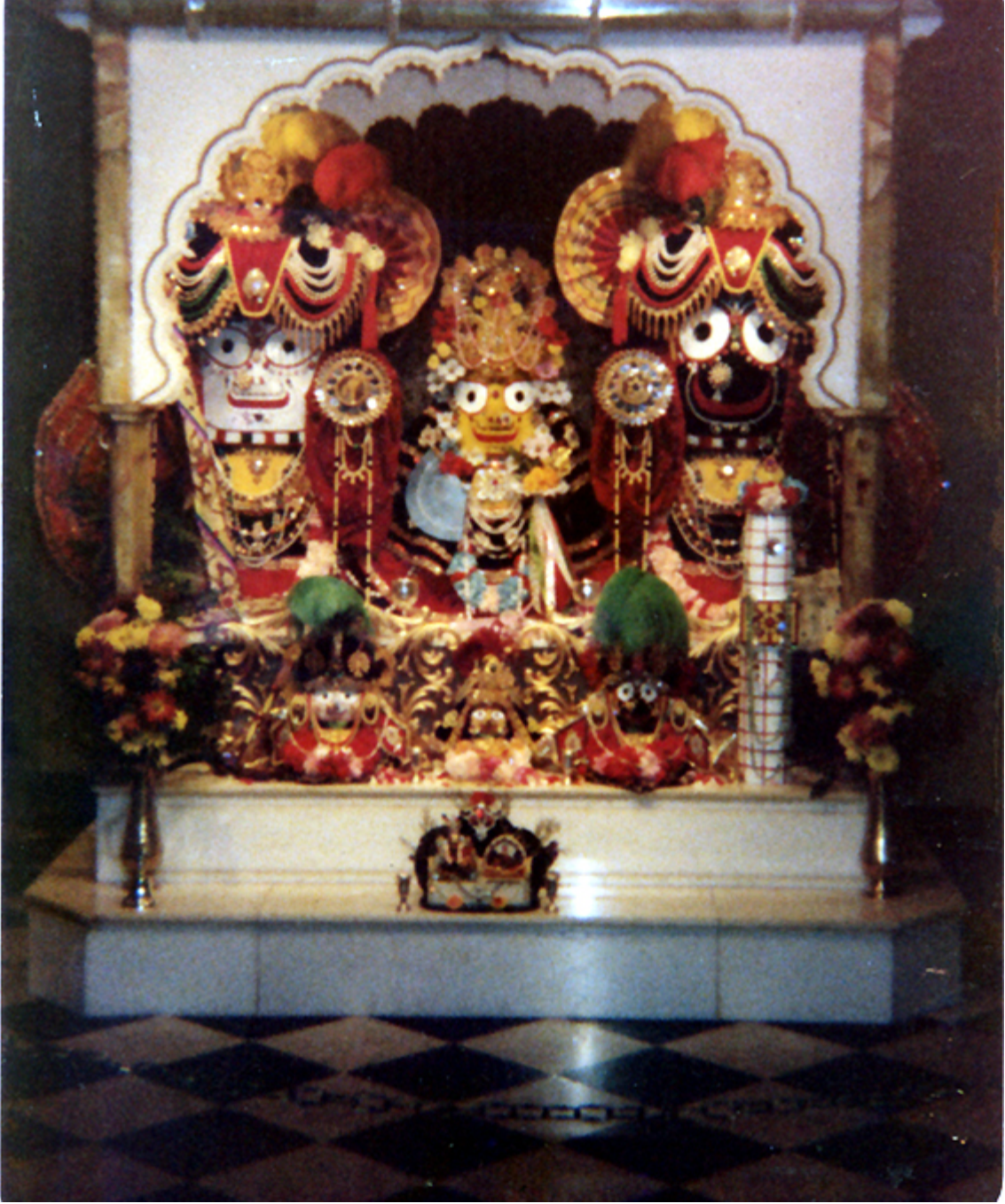


Lord Krishna's Gumsha

Lastly and certainly not least is the brahmana's thread pictured on Lord Krsna's gumsha.

In April of 1979 I was awarded diksa, harinama initiation, and received the spiritual name of Jagannatha dasa. Krsna's name Jagannatha means the Lord of the universe. Jagannatha dasa is the servant of the Lord of the universe.

Every morning after this initiation I would quietly chant the prayers in glorification of Lord Jaganntha in front of the Deities of Sri Jagannatha, Sri Baladeva and Lady Subhadra.



Lord Jagannatha Lord Baladeva & Lady Subhadra

*krpa-paravarah
rama-vani-ramah
surendrair
jagannathah*

aradhyah

*sajala-jalada-sreni-ruciro
sphurad-amala-pankeruha-mukhah
sruti-gana-sikha-gita-carito*

svami nayana-patha-gami bhavatu me

Lord Jagannatha is an ocean of mercy and He is beautiful like a row of blackish rain clouds. He is the storehouse of bliss for Laksmi and Sarasvati, and His face is like a spotless full-blown lotus. He is worshiped by the best of demigods and sages, and His glories are sung by the Upanishads. May that Jagannatha Svami be the object of my vision.
(*Sri Jagannathastaka, Verse 4*)

A week or two after initiation and daily prayers before my Lords the brahmana pujari who served their Lordships every day, HG Krsnot Kirtana dasa (ACBSP), came to me. "Here is Lord Jagannatha's brahmana's thread."



HG Krsnot Kirtana dasa (ACBSP) in Lake Huntington



Lord Jagannatha's Brahmana's Thread

Those are my personal transcendental tangible evidences of the mercy of the Vaisnavas.

Personal Remnants and Reminiscences of 340 West 55th Street

BY: BHAKTA JOHN JAGANNATHA



One of a number of plastic coated Deity cards I made in the bookroom

Apr 07, 2021 — NEW YORK (SUN) — PART TWO

First things first. I must take responsibility for my own actions. I may place some responsibility for being forced out of my service in Srila Prabhupada's bookroom on authorities in the temple. However I really have only my self to blame.

International Society for Krishna Consciousness / Founder-Acarya: His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Tridandi Goswami

Satsvarupa das Goswami

Acarya & Governing Body Commissioner

CENTER ISKCON VANCOUVER
5580 S. E. Marine Drive
Burnaby, B. C., V5J 3G8

DATE..... April 11th 1979..

Dear Bhakta John:

Please accept my blessings. I have received your letter of 4/5/79, which I have carried with me here to Vancouver.

You ask is it improper to desire a different service. It is alright if one takes a service that is his inclination. Especially in the beginning, everyone's service is more or less the same, chanting and hearing and being trained up in the philosophy. It is very important that we develop a submissive attitude not only toward our spiritual master but his representatives. We have to show them steadiness in our service. If we have a particular inclination or talent there is nothing wrong with letting it be known and surely Kṛṣṇa will enable us to do that which is satisfying to us in His devotional service. So it is possible that you may work with me on the BTG or Bhaktivedanta Institute. We can consult properly and decide what is best. Just always do everything in the standard way, consulting authorities and trying to render regular service and you will be alright.

Hope this meets you in good health.

Your ever well-wisher,

Satsvarupa das Goswami

Satsvarupa das Goswami

SDG/add

His Grace Bhakta John Stayton
ISKCON
340 West 55th Street
New York, New York 10019
U. S. A.

Here I am shooting my self in the foot. I was happy serving in Srila Prabhupada's bookroom but I thought I could also expand my service. There is nothing wrong with that. Krsna consciousness like Krsna is ever expanding. My fault, my mistake, as SDG not so subtly explains, is not first consulting the local authorities or jumping the chain of command. Just like in the military the private can't just go to the commanding officer with a request. That's insubordination to proper authorities. He first goes to the sergeant who goes to the lieutenant who goes to the captain and so on.

I didn't want to leave the bookroom. Since the BTG was locating to 340 West 55th Street temple I thought perhaps I could serve both. Here is an example of my blundering immaturity. I could barely read and write, what to speak of a total lack of understanding of the intricacies of the science of self realization, and I am ignorantly egotistically thinking I am capable of making some useful contribution to the Back to Godhead magazine or to the Bhaktivedanta Institute.

So I humbly apologize to Romapada dasa, now swami, for writing previously that he owed me some sort of spiritual restitution for replacing me in the bookroom with his godbrother. I am the spiritual debtor in this case and in every case for that matter.



Another Deity card made in the bookroom

Leaving Srila Prabhupada's bookroom

After losing my spot in the bookroom I was given another service. I was still spending part of the mornings helping to wash the pots and pans and the prasadam serving articles and utensils in Srimati Radharani's kitchen. There was a new preaching program just starting – Wednesday evening prasadam by invitation only.

To facilitate this new program first there had to be advertisements such as posters placed in windows of local health food establishments and vegetarian restaurants along with invitation cards. The main aim, as I was made to understand, was to attract a more spiritually inclined patron to the temple.

My self and Bhakta Mark, later HG Matsyrupa dasa (SDG), were charged with this initial part of the program. Bhakta Mark performed the majority of this service, speaking with the owners of the various businesses, while I sulkily lagged along lamenting my loss of and hankering to return to my previous service.

Once that was accomplished to the satisfaction of authorities the actual prasadam serving and preaching on Wednesdays began. It became quite obvious from the start that the majority of those who came with their invitation cards were the Sunday free feast regulars. They were there for the prasadam but there was no real expansion of newcomers to Krsna consciousness from this program. Perhaps there were a few first timers and that was fine. There is no loss or diminution in Krsna conscious endeavor. I was given the opportunity to preach and to serve prasadam and make advancement in that way. I was preaching to and serving prasadam to persons who had been associating with devotees for years but whose only interest was the free food. That aspect was a bit frustrating. I grudgingly surrendered to my new service mostly because I enjoyed serving Sri Sri Radha Govinda prasadam and all that entailed.



Another Deity card made in the bookroom

Leaving Sri Sri Radha Govinda Mandira again

No! Not Again! I don't believe it. Believe it spirit soul. Are you not familiar with the conclusion of Lord Caitanya's Sri Siksastaka?

<i>aslisya</i>	<i>va</i>	<i>pada-ratam</i>	<i>pinastu</i>	<i>mam</i>
<i>adarsanam</i>		<i>marma-hatam</i>	<i>karotu</i>	<i>va</i>
<i>yatha</i>	<i>tatha</i>	<i>va</i>	<i>vidadhatu</i>	<i>lampato</i>
<i>mat-prana-nathas tu sa eva naparah</i>				

I know no one but Krsna as my Lord, and He shall remain so even if He handles me roughly by His embrace or makes me brokenhearted by not being present before me. He is completely free to do anything and everything, for He is always my worshipful Lord, unconditionally.

Yes. I was sent back to the Hartford preaching center. It does not require a high IQ to predict my immature egotistical offensive reaction to once more being sent away, banished, in my estimation, from my comfortable arrangement, my kashipu.

International Society for Krishna Consciousness / Founder-Acarya: His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Tridandi Goswami

Satsvarupa das Goswami

Acarya & Governing Body Commissioner

CENTER ISKCON NEW YORK
340 West 55th St.
New York, N.Y. 10019

DATE: June 26,1979.

Dear Jagannatha das,

Please accept my blessings. I have your note of 6/24 from Hartford.

As far as combatting the rascal tendencies of the mind, one method recommended by the previous acaryas (Visvanath Cakravarti) is that we ignore the mind. Just as if you hear a dog barking, that does not stop you from doing your duty. So the rascal mind cannot be stopped from its concoctions but you have to place your real value in the instructions of the parampara. The mind can be your friend but when it is dictating such things it is your enemy and you should recognize it as such.

As far as another war, Prabhupada has said that while such war is likely because of the demons possessing such weapons, it can be averted if they take to Krsna consciousness. We should not speculate on when this war may take place nor should we engage in mundane preparations of defense like fall-out shelters, etc. We should engage fully in book distribution and sankirtan preaching and engage the fallen souls in that way. The main war is already going on--it is the material energy. Everyone is dying from this war without exception. So nothing should distract you from trying to develop the preaching field as it is. In the event of any calamity we must learn to chant the holy name of the Lord and only that will save us. Hope this meets you in good health,

Your ever well-wisher,

Satsvarupa das Goswami
Satsvarupa das Goswami

SDG/lsd

His Grace Jagannatha das
ISKCON HARTFORD
84 Silver Lane
Hartford, Conn. 06118

I was initiated on April 22, 1979 and as you can see from the above correspondence only two months later I am in Hartford. The very first line shows I am having problems with my rascal mind. I was on the mental and false-ego platform. I wasn't hearing or chanting properly. I was engrossed in hankering and lamenting and woe is me instead of accepting my situation as Srila Prabhupada's and Krsna's mercy on me to reform my bad habits and surrender to the process of sadhana – hearing and chanting and remembering the holy names – HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE.

HG Kurma Rupa dasa (ACBSP) was the temple president of ISKCON Hartford. He was the most humble devotee I have ever met. He knew I was suffering from some mental and emotional negative reaction. He could see my intentional indifference to association with the residents of Hartford temple. Anyone could see my puny results of book distribution and laxmi points.

I always remember this one instruction he imparted to me. "Krsna will not put an impediment in your way that you cannot overcome. This same impediment will keep coming back until you fully realize your dependence on guru and Krsna." Yes.



Another Deity card made in the bookroom

Leaving the field of preaching activities

"Prabhupada doesn't overlook our offenses. That would be to neglect us. No. He cares for us like the sick children we are. We are far from perfect and hardly worthy of being called his sons, but Prabhupada loves us.

He has taught us that, like soldiers on a battlefield, we're all subject to being knocked down, wounded, and even killed. When a comrade falls, we should rush to help him, knowing that each soldier is precious to the general. How often Srila Prabhupada has shed tears when Maya Devi snatched one of his soldiers! May the day never come when we rejoice to see a godbrother fall, eager to usurp his post or proud to esteem ourselves elevated by comparison."

(Excerpt from Vrindaban Days, by Hayagriva Dasa, Copyright 1988, pg. 99)

We went out to distribute BTG's in a local shopping center parking lot. I was riding in a vehicle with two fellow bhaktas. One prabhu was driving and I was in the back seat with the other prabhu. There was some sort of inimical relationship between the two prabhhus. First one would give some instruction to the other and then the other would correct the other and return his own instruction to the other prabhu. It was similar to watching a verbal tennis match as words went back and forth with increasing speed and rising audible volume. Soon the two prabhhus were yelling at each other. And I am trapped with the two insulting loudspeakers. Oh my, Krsna!

Now my rascal mind was yelling at me. "What am I doing here? Why do I have to listen to these two nonsense rascals? Tell them to shut up before I explode! Arrrgh! Get me out of here!"

Fortunately I was let out of the vehicle first, at one site, and the prabhhus drove off to another site. I immediately sat down on a bench in front of one of the stores and took out my japa beads and chanted softly to my self. The rest of my time there I sat and read the current edition of the BTG from cover to cover. I did no preaching except to my mind, no attempt at distributing literature and no attempt at collecting laxmi.

Eventually the time came for the prabhhus to return to my lot to take me back to the temple. I saw the vehicle pull into the parking lot. I was still sitting on the bench in front in plain sight. Both the prabhhus came out of the vehicle. They both walked within inches of me and both walked right past me without seeing me. I sat there silently and watched them return again, walking right past me again, not seeing me again, they both got back in the vehicle and left.

Yes. I had little desire to be seen and they had little desire to see me. Maya.

After they left I got up from my seat and began my walk along the highway back to the temple. I arrived at 84 Silver Lane after midnight. In the parking area I noticed a mobile home. I did not want to disturb anyone so I climbed into the back seat of the vehicle I rode in during the previous morning and took rest. Fortunately it was not too cold. I awoke for mangala arotika but stayed outside the temple chanting japa until the chanting inside was completed and then I went inside.

To my surprise Niranjana dasa, now swami, was in attendance. He brought me into the mobile home he was traveling with and had a long talk with me. He ascertained that I had no desire to remain in Hartford and reluctantly agreed to return me to Sri Sri Radha Govinda.



Another Deity card made in the bookroom

Blooped

The origin and meaning of the ISKCON term "bloop" according to HG Acyutananda das (ACBSP).

"Swamiji's lectures often included the metaphor of falling back into the material illusory ocean or maya. He would gesture as if throwing a stone.

One day Vince got confused and yelled, "I don't get it. It's just another religion, another sectarian cult."

He stomped out of the temple.

Brahmananda and I looked at each other, and I said, "He fell back into the ocean of maya."

Brahmananda made the gesture of throwing a stone and said, "Bloop."

After that, every time a devotee left we'd say, "Ah, he's blooped." Or if someone was misunderstanding we'd say, "I think he's gonna bloop." Or when someone didn't show up for a few weeks, we'd say, "He's probably blooped." Bloop became our word for leaving.

Some weeks later the Swami asked, "Where's that boy Vince?"
Brahmananda said, "Oh, he blooped."
Prabhupada slowly turned to Brahmananda.
"Bloop? What is this bloop?"

Brahmananda gulped and meekly said, "Well, you've been explaining how if we do not catch onto the lotus feet of Krishna, again we will fall into the ocean of material illusion. So, like a stone falling into water, it makes that sound – bloop."

Prabhupada paused, considered the word, and said, "Well then, if he has blooped, what can be done?"

(Excerpt from BLAZING SADHUS or Never Trust A Holy Man Who Can't Dance, Chapter Two, 26 Second Avenue: The Storefront Monastery, pgs. 75-76 by Achyutananda Das, Copyright 2012)

Now I was back in 340 West 55th Street. I was moved far from my former room near the sankirtana devotees. I shared a room with my godbrother HG Partha Dhanurdara dasa (SDG) who was engaged in service in Srimati Radharani's kitchen under the guidance of HG Visnu Gada dasa (ACBSP). My duties were divided between kitchen service and counting room seva but it was mostly serving in the kitchen.

Something was missing – my desire to serve the Vaisnavas and Srila Prabhupada and Sri Sri Radha Govinda. It is that simple. I lost any miniscule faith in the holy names that I may have had.

"Your sinful karma is like a revolving fan," Swamiji explains. "By chanting Hare Krishna, you turn it off. The fan may still revolve for a while after being turned off, but since it is getting no more juice, it will soon stop."

"When it stops, does it stop for good?" someone asks.

"You know where the switch is," Swamiji says. "You can always turn it back on."

(Excerpt from The Hare Krishna Explosion by Hayagriva Dasa, copyright 1985, pgs. 61-62)

Thinking feeling and willing. I was thinking of leaving. I was feeling I wanted to leave. I was willing to leave. I left. In the middle of the night, like a thief in the

night, I silently snuck out of Sri Sri Radha Govinda Mandira of 340 West 55th Street and returned to my old neighborhood in Queens.

I stayed with my elder brother and attempted to return to my former life. I tried to associate with my former friends. They looked at me and reacted to me as if I were a strange diseased alien from some distant planet who did not speak their language. Their association was tasteless and void of any enjoyment. I was miserable.

After two weeks or so of my plugging in my fan someone came to the home of my elder brother. The bell rang downstairs and my brother went down. I looked out the door and saw a tall slender man wearing dark clothes and what appeared to be a large black cowboy hat on his head. I took a double take and realized it was Niranjana dasa looking for me to bring me back to my spiritual home. I was amused at first because I never saw him dressed in karmi clothes and then I was ashamed of my nonsense behavior.

Soon I was in the Port Authority Bus Terminal. I went there because I knew there would be book distributors preaching. I approached one and asked him to call the temple to please send someone to take me back. Shortly thereafter Niranjana arrived. He punched me hard in my arm and then brought me back to the temple.

When I was back in the temple there was the same sort of reaction from the devotees that I felt when I tried to return to my former neighborhood associates. The devotees looked at me as if I were a diseased alien who did not speak their language. I was shunned. I was exiled as far from my former associates as possible. I was given a room with no room mate. The devotee who shared the room didn't live there. I don't know where the prabhu lived. He was only in the room once while I was there and that was only for a brief silent moment.

This was the lowest point in my devotional life. I felt abandoned by devotees and non-devotees alike. I was isolated from any personal devotional association but I was back in Srila Prabhupada's and Sri Sri Radha Govinda's home. I was still able to chant the holy names – HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE. I was still allowed to attend the morning and evening programs. I was still allowed to wash the pots and pans and at least allowed to serve the Vaisnavas again.

I was shown a locker to use in the room when I first moved in. It was dirty and dingy, old and musty inside. There were some decrepit black plastic bags and papers on the bottom covered in grime. I took up the task to clean up my new home within Krsna's home. I made up my mind to make the best use of what I was given by the mercy of the Supreme Lord.

Once I changed my attitude I started to feel a little happiness and gratitude for my situation. So I pulled out the filthy bags and papers from the locker and the most wonderful thing happened.

Here is what I found underneath, apparently covered in a mountain of dirt –



Sri Nathji

"Let Krsna, who is so kind, beautiful and merciful, protect us. When angry Indra sent torrents of rain, accompanied by showers of ice blocks and high wind, He immediately took compassion upon us and saved us and our families, cows and valuable possessions by picking up the Govardhana Hill, just like a child picks up a mushroom. He saved us so wonderfully. May He continue to mercifully glance over us and our cows. May we live peacefully

under the protection of wonderful Krsna."
(*Krsna Book, Volume One, Chapter 26, Wonderful Krsna, pg. 179*)

Thus concludes Personal Remnants and Reminiscences of 340 West 55TH Street.